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REV. DR. HAWES'S SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Board of Commissioners for
Foreign Missions.

1846.



The Help of the Lord, the Seal of the Missionary Work.

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S E R M O N ,

PREACHED AT NEW HAVEN, CT., SEPT. 8, 1846,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING.

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B O S T O N :

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S E R M O N .

I SAMUEL VII. 12.

HITHERTO HATH THE LORD HELPED US.

THIRTY-SIX years ago, on the fifth of the present month, five grave and venerable looking men met by appointment in the private parlor of a Connecticut pastor.* They were men of large minds, of devoted hearts, and of great wisdom and energy in devising and executing plans of Christian benevolence. They constituted the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. They had been appointed to their office the preceding June, by the General Association of Massachusetts, and were now met, for the first time, to organize the Board, and devise ways and means for carrying out the great object of their appointment. One of that number still survives;† the others have gone to their reward on high. Their meeting attracted but little notice. They had come together, three from Massachusetts, and two from Connecticut, to consult on a subject

* Rev. Dr. Porter, Farmington.

† Rev. Dr. Chapin, Wethersfield.

respecting which the community then felt but little interest, and had but little knowledge. They were without funds, without a single missionary in the field, without experience, and, in so far as this country was concerned, without precedents to guide them in their deliberations. Added to all, how the public would regard the enterprize in which they were engaged, was wholly problematical. Like the disciples of old, in that upper room in Jerusalem, they had a mighty work to accomplish, but the means of its accomplishment were yet to be made known to them. But strong in faith, and relying on God for help, they entered upon the great work which had been assigned to them, formed their plan of operations, appealed to the Christian public for aid, and the work went forward far beyond their most sanguine hopes. Taking our position at this point, let us, brethren and friends, briefly review the dealings of God with the Board, and the missions established under its patronage during the period of its operations, and, if I mistake not, we shall find occasion, at every stage of the review, to take up the language of the text, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." And,

1. This is true in respect to a vast enlargement of the accessible field of missions. At the commencement of the period under review, but a comparatively few spots on the globe were open to missionary operations. The great empire of China was hermetically sealed against Christian light and influence. The dark continent of Africa was very little known, covered over by a dense cloud through

which scarcely a ray of light, from any source, had penetrated. The London Missionary Society had, indeed, a few years before, commenced operations in South Africa. But its missions encountered violent opposition, were repeatedly broken up, and had for a long time to struggle for existence. At Tahiti, the mission established there by the London Society, was almost extinct, owing to the bloody insurrections and wars among the natives. In Hindoostan, though under British power, so great was the jealousy of the government in regard to missionary influence, that even missionaries who had been sent out from England, were tolerated only with the greatest difficulty, and when the first missionaries of this Board arrived in the country, they were at once ordered to depart. They fled to Bombay. Orders to leave followed them there ; and it was only after a long controversy with the local authorities, and encountering innumerable reverses and discouragements, that they were permitted to remain on mere sufferance. This was thirty-three years ago, last February. How changed the state of the world now, in regard to being accessible to Christian influence ! Instead of being obliged to ask, as were the founders of our Board, with great solicitude, Where *can* we send missionaries ? we may rather ask, Where can we not send them ? The world, which is the great field of missions, has been surveyed in well nigh all its parts ; and the portions of it now perfectly open to the bearers of the gospel message are large enough to exhaust the resources of all Christendom for

many years to come. China, with her three hundred and fifty millions of people, is open, and the decree of the emperor has gone forth for the free toleration of Christianity in his dominions. Hindoostan, with her one hundred and forty millions of souls, is as free of access almost as our own country. The same may be said of the islands of the Pacific, of Australasia, and of many large and thickly populated portions of Africa. Even in Turkey, where but a few years since a Christian missionary could not go without incurring certain death, or the most imminent risk of it, the rights of conscience are now recognized, and the sword of persecution sheathed. Mohammedans may change their religion and no longer be exposed to decapitation;* and the persecutions to which our Armenian brethren were subjected during the last winter, have, in the wonder-working providence of God, resulted in securing for them religious freedom, which, we may hope, will be extended throughout Syria, and all the dependencies of the Ottoman empire.

Thus God has been opening the way all over the globe for the going forth of his truth to the conquest of the nations. There are, at this moment, not less than five hundred millions of souls, to whom, so far as freedom of access is concerned, we might carry the gospel to-morrow, and who are now perishing

* An arrangement to this effect was made some two years since, chiefly through the agency of Sir Stratford Canning, British Ambassador at Constantinople. It had special reference perhaps to that class of Mohammedans, who, having renounced Christianity, might wish to return to their former faith. It is believed, however, that the arrangement is, in fact, or will be made by construction, applicable to the whole body of Mohammedans.

for lack of vision. Had this been predicted thirty-six years ago, it would have been deemed utterly incredible, and the friends of the missionary cause would have said, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, then this thing might be." But the thing is done ; and in consequence, the state of the world may now be said to be very similar to that of the Roman empire at the period of the planting of Christianity. Roads had been cut into all parts of the empire, radiating in every direction from the capital, over which the apostles and first preachers of the gospel might travel with ease and safety, as they went forth to bear the messages of salvation to remote tribes and nations of men. So it is now, only in a higher and far more perfect sense. Most surprisingly, in these latter days, has God, in his providence, been removing the barriers which formerly separated the nations from each other, and has opened up highways by land and sea, whereby the heralds of his grace may fly abroad, as on the wings of the wind, bearing their messages of love to earth's remotest bounds. In consequence of the extension of commerce, and the vast increase of intercourse among the nations, consulates and embassies have been established by Christian powers, in all the important ports and countries on the globe ; and this is often a great source of safety and assistance to the missionary in the prosecution of his work—an advantage but little known or enjoyed only a few years since. Thus true is it, that the Lord hath helped us in opening before us new and greatly enlarged fields of missions.

2. This is equally true in regard to a vast increase of the missionary spirit. It is an interesting fact, that our country, especially this northern portion of it, was planted in the spirit of missions. One great design of our fathers in coming here was to build up the kingdom of Christ in these ends of the earth, and gather the natives into the fold of Christ. And there has never been a time from that day to the present, when the spirit of missions was not alive and active in the bosoms of many of the friends of the Savior, prompting them to sacrifices and efforts for the salvation of the heathen in the land, equal at least to any made in our day. Still it was not until the formation of the American Board that any thing was done in the way of sending the gospel to the heathen abroad. The spirit of home missions had a few years previous been rising in the churches, and several societies had been formed in different sections of the country for the purpose of sending missionaries to our destitute new settlements. This naturally awakened concern in the minds of the benevolent, for the benighted heathen; and individuals, here and there, began to inquire whether something might not and ought not to be done for their salvation. But no *general* interest was felt on the subject. It was the day of small things. Many regarded the enterprize of a foreign mission as chimerical, many openly opposed it on various grounds; and through prejudice or want of information, it found favor only with a comparatively few. And when it was, at length, resolved by the Board to attempt a mission in some part of the

heathen world, so great was the doubt whether the Christian community would furnish means to sustain the undertaking, that it was deemed expedient to send one of the four young men, who had been accepted as missionaries, to England, to ascertain "whether their support, in whole or in part, at least for a season, might not be derived from the London Missionary Society."

How different the state of things now ! From the time of the organization of the Board till the present hour, the spirit of missions has been steadily on the advance. It has pervaded all denominations of Christians in the land, and has organized them for the great purpose of spreading the gospel through the world. There is nothing sudden, enthusiastic, or ephemeral in the rise and progress of this spirit. It is calm, deliberate, intelligent, and decided. It is generous, self-denying, self-sacrificing. It has every mark of an heavenly origin, and it has been gradually bringing the whole Christian community under a deep-seated, practical conviction, that the gospel of the grace of God ought to be published, with the least possible delay, to all mankind. This is now coming to be the settled persuasion of all who call themselves Christians ; and it is not easy for any one to establish his claim to a Christian character who does not acknowledge his obligation to bear a part in the evangelization of the world.

"Mark how this spirit of missions pervades the Christian literature of the day ; how it mingles itself with the very elements of instruction in the Sabbath school and by the fireside ; how it speaks from the

pulpit in the voice of every minister of the word ; how it breathes in the prayers of myriads in the closet, in the family, and in the praying circle ; how it goes forth with unwearied step, gathering funds from all classes of people in all parts of the land, and operating every where and in every form, to carry out the last command of the Savior, to preach the gospel to every creature."

It is this spirit which has given rise to so many benevolent societies in our day, and is supplying them so generously with the means of usefulness. It is this spirit which has raised the funds of the Board from hundreds to hundreds of thousands of dollars ; which has so multiplied its missions and its missionaries ; which has drawn around it so strongly the affections, the prayers, and the co-operation of the friends of Christ, and awakened such exalted hopes as to the agency it is destined to exert in bringing on the latter-day glory of the church. Surely in all this we cannot but gratefully recognize the hand of God. The spirit of missions, which now so widely and so efficiently pervades the Christian community, is of his own inspiring, and by his help it will continue to spread and to increase in activity and power, till the entire resources of Christendom, so far as needed, shall be called forth in the world's conversion.

The progress of the spirit of missions, so remarkable in our country, has not been less so in Great Britain and other Protestant lands. The Baptist mission to India, established in 1792, began with a subscription of only £13 2s. 6d. When the yearly

income of the Society had risen to £1,500, Andrew Fuller said he did not doubt that it would, in the course of time, reach £5,000. Dr. Bogue, one of the founders of the London Missionary Society, said, when it had an income of £5,000, he did not doubt that one day, as the consummation of faith and exertion, the annual income of the Society would be £20,000. The yearly income of the Baptist Society has risen to £26,000, or nearly 130,000 dollars; and that of the London Society to the sum of £80,000, or 400,000 dollars. There has been a corresponding increase in the resources of the other great missionary societies, both in England and on the continent. The British Wesleyan Missionary Society expends nearly half a million of dollars a year in the cause of missions, and the Church Missionary Society about the same sum. It is estimated that at least two millions and a half of dollars are annually expended in advancing this great cause by the various Protestant societies in Christendom. All this is the fruit of the spirit of missions, which has grown up chiefly within the last fifty years. Surely we must say, in view of all these co-operating agencies, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." He has shown, in a most striking manner, that the silver and the gold are his, and at his pleasure he can allay prejudice, silence opposition, remove objections, and open the hearts and the hands of the rich and the poor to contribute of their substance to aid in spreading his gospel over the world.

3. We shall have still further evidence of the

continued help of the Lord, if we advert for a moment to the wise and successful manner in which the concerns of the Board have been conducted. Bating the imperfections common to all benevolent associations conducted by fallible men, we venture to claim for this institution such a measure of wisdom, disinterestedness, and efficiency in its spirit, policy, and plans of operation, as justly challenges universal confidence and support. Its founders were among the most intelligent, calm-minded, and devotedly Christian men of their day. No one can read the history of the measures adopted by them, in the establishment of the Board, and in its early operations, without feeling that they were indeed guided by wisdom from above. * And from the first, the Board has been favored with the counsels of men eminently qualified by Christian principle, and by their established character and influence, to give a wise and efficient direction to the affairs of a great institution. The four Secretaries who have departed this life,—Worcester, Evarts, Cornelius, and Wisner,—were known to many present; and you will not think that I give them undue praise, when I say, that the church has been blessed with very few wiser or better men. Of their successors in office, it is enough to say, that they are every way worthy of the high confidence reposed in them by the Christian community. In the Prudential Committee, who manage the immediate executive concerns of the Board, there have always been men of high standing in society, alike distinguished for their talents and for their sound business habits. In per-

forming the arduous and difficult duties committed to them, they have deeply felt their responsibility to God and the Christian community. They have prayed much for divine light and guidance ; and wisdom from on high, I fully believe, has been imparted to them in no ordinary measure. It is owing to this, I doubt not, that they have been enabled so to manage the concerns of the Board as to secure for it the growing confidence and affection of the churches. Hence the deep sympathy felt by the community in the operations of the Board. Hence the readiness with which its appeals for aid have been responded to in difficult and trying emergencies. Such emergencies, unforeseen and beyond the control of human wisdom, have several times arisen in the history of the Board ; but they have been nobly and generously met by its friends, who have thus evinced their love to the cause, and their confidence in those who are intrusted with its special management.

The continued help of the Lord is still further to be acknowledged, in that he has raised up a succession of able and faithful missionaries, whom he has disposed to devote their lives to his service among the heathen. The time has never been since the organization of the Board, when young men of talents and piety were not ready to meet the call of duty, and give themselves to the sacred cause of missions. Many who have thus been employed, stood high in their own country for their talents and scholarship, and might, had they been disposed to remain at home, have commanded a settlement in any of the most eligible churches in the land. But

the love of Christ bore them away to other fields of labor ; they counted not their lives dear to them, so that they might bear the tidings of salvation to those perishing amid the darkness and miseries of paganism. Some of them have laid their bones in Asia, in Africa, in the islands of the sea, or among the wild men of our own forests. Others still toil on in the service of their Lord, cheerfully wearing out in the cause to which they have devoted their lives.

Among so large a number of missionaries as have been employed by our Board, there must, of course, be a diversity of gifts and qualifications ; but the testimony is uniform and full, coming from scientific travellers and distinguished laymen residing on the ground, and from the missionaries and directors of missionary societies abroad, that no abler or more devoted missionaries are any where to be found than those who have been sent forth from the American churches. I have had some opportunity to know, and this testimony I believe to be true, and it is just cause of thanksgiving to God, that he has raised up and sent forth so many of our ablest and most devoted young men as laborers in a foreign field.

Another thing I may mention in this connection, as clearly indicating the helping hand of God. It is this. No essential difference of opinion, no matter of controversy or dispute, or disunion, has ever been allowed to disturb the deliberations of the Committee at the Missionary House, or of the Board at its annual meetings. The annual meetings have uniformly been characterized by great harmony of sentiment and feeling, and often have been perva-

ded in an eminent degree by the Spirit and presence of God, and those who have attended them have felt that it was indeed good to be there. May the presence of the divine Savior be vouchsafed to us in the present meeting, and all in attendance receive a fresh baptism from the God of missions.

4. If we consider next the success which has attended the operations of the Board, the actual results of the missions under its direction, we shall have still more striking evidence of the fact, that "hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Here a broad field opens before us, which we can now but very imperfectly survey. A slight view, however, may suffice to convince us that our labor in sending the gospel to the heathen, far from being in vain, has been crowned with very marked success.

In coming to a just estimate in relation to this subject, it should be borne in mind, that the first years of a missionary's life are, of necessity, years of preparation. He has to learn the language of the people to whom he has been sent—a barbarous, unwritten language, it may be ; he has to acquaint himself with their manners and opinions ; to overcome their prejudices ; to gain their confidence ; to make them understand the nature and design of his mission ; to prepare elementary books and translate the Scriptures for their use. This, and much more like this, is all preparatory work ; it is breaking up the ground and casting in the seed, and a great deal of time and labor is necessarily expended in this way, before any fruit can be gathered. And this is, in fact, the work in which most of our missionaries

have been employed a considerable part of the time they have been in the field. It is only within a comparatively recent period that the way has at all been prepared for the realization of results. Accordingly it is a fact, that the success of our missions, estimated by the number of conversions, has been more than twelve times as great during the last ten years, as it was in the whole previous twenty-six years of the Board's history. Ten years ago there were about two thousand members of our mission churches ; now there are twenty-four thousand eight hundred and twenty-four.

It should be recollected, too, that the effects of missions are far from being confined to the fields where they are established. There is a reflex influence on the churches at home, of the most important kind, imparting health and activity to their piety, and securing the frequent and copious effusions of God's Spirit in revivals. No greater calamity, I am sure, could befall our churches, than the suspension or breaking up of our foreign missions. It may seem a solecism, but I speak sober truth when I say, we can by no means *afford* to be relieved from the expense of supporting these missions. Our poorest churches and the poorest members in them cannot afford to be thus relieved. The spirit of missions departing from our churches would be like the departure from them of the Spirit of God. They would become dead, fruitless bodies, or exist only as worldly associations, diffusing around naught but an influence to mislead, corrupt and destroy.

The fact has often been noticed, and it is one

of serious instruction, as well as of grateful and encouraging import, that religion at home has prospered very much in proportion to the interest which has been felt in the cause of missions. And certain it is, that revivals of religion have never been more numerous and powerful, and our churches have never, on the whole, been in a more vigorous and flourishing state, than since the spirit of missions began to pervade the Christian community, and to wake up thought and feeling in behalf of the spiritually destitute, whether at home or abroad. Has not the experience of our churches, I ask, during the last thirty or forty years, been in happy accordance with the inspired declaration, “They that water, shall also themselves be watered; they that sow plentifully, shall also reap plentifully”?

But let us notice a few facts. Look back to the period of the organization of this Board. I need not stop here to remind you of the many great benevolent societies, of various names and of different denominations, that have since been organized, all, I think, quickened into being and aided in their plans of operation by the example of this Board of Missions. Think of what this Board was when it first rose into being, and of what it is now; think of its four ordained missionaries then, now multiplied to 134; and the whole number of its laborers in foreign lands, including assistant female missionaries, native teachers and preachers, physicians, and others, rising to 492; think of its one station then, now multiplied to 93, in various and widely distant parts of the heathen world—each having several preaching

stations around and belonging to it—centres of heavenly light and influence to the surrounding regions of darkness; think of its versions of the Scriptures and other books into twenty-three languages and dialects of the heathen world, and of the fifteen printing establishments connected with its missions, with fonts of type and preparations to print in thirty-two different languages; think of its seventy-three churches, embracing 24,824 members; of its seven seminaries for educating native preachers and teachers, having 487 pupils, and its 31 boarding-schools, with 1,387 pupils, making in all 1,874 boarding scholars; and of its 602 free schools with 29,171 pupils, raising the whole number of youth, in a course of Christian education, to 31,015; think how, when it commenced its work, it was without funds, and all was to be begun; now its income is over 260,000 dollars; while the light of large experience and bright hope shines on its path; how, for several years, it was accustomed to meet in a private room for the transaction of its annual business; now, the largest edifice is not sufficient to accommodate those who attend the sacred convocations, to hear of its success, and unite in its services and counsels; think of all this in relation to the future, especially in regard to the circulation of the Scriptures, the instruction of the young, and the raising up of native missionaries, together with the countless silent, yet powerful influences that emanate from Christian missions, all operating to plant the seeds of future civilization, to elevate, purify, and bless the state of society where they exist;—put all these things together, and view them in their

results in eternity, countless multitudes of immortal beings raised from the degradation and miseries of sin to immortal life and blessedness in heaven,—then say, whether the cost has been too great for the good realized, and whether there is not in the effects of our missions, in the fruits actually gathered from them, the most encouraging evidence that “the Lord hath hitherto helped us” in this great and blessed work.

The view thus presented is of course very general, a mere outline, and must therefore fail of giving any thing like an adequate idea of the good, of various kinds, which has been accomplished through the instrumentality of our missions. Could we descend to particulars, review the history of each mission, and call up the thousand incidental blessings, which, in consequence of missionary effort, have fallen upon individuals and families and communities, diffusing intelligence, purity, comfort, freedom, and hope, where before naught was seen but ignorance, debasement, oppression, and despair, there is not a Christian here, I am sure, who would not exult, with grateful joy, at the sight, and bind himself with new interest and devotion to a cause so manifestly approved and blessed of God.

5. There is another most interesting topic on which I might easily enlarge; it is the increasing facilities and continually brightening prospects which God is holding out to cheer and help us on in this great and good work. But I must dismiss it with a passing word. The spirit of missions is the spirit of Christ. It brought him into our world on the great errand of its salvation. He breathed it into

his apostles, when, at his ascension, he gave them command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And the measure of it which has been shed down upon the church in these latter days, is but the pledge of a more plentiful effusion—the precursor of a brighter and more blessed day, soon to rise upon the world. What God has begun, and has hitherto so signally helped forward by his power and grace, he will not forsake, but will bear on the work thus commenced to triumphant success over all the earth. The machinery, if I may so call it, by which this dark and miserable world is to be raised to holiness and God, is already in operation. “Its many wheels are beginning to revolve, and a complicated, widely-extended movement, continually accelerated by fresh impulses, is bearing along the world from its wintry and torpid position, and bringing it under the influence of serener heavens and an awakening spring. All the genial powers of nature and grace, of science and art, are being unlocked, and the better feelings that have long slumbered in the breast of man, are rising into life and activity.” Viewed in the light of God’s word and providence, the future presents brighter visions, and holds out more animating motives to engage and quicken us in the great work of giving the gospel to the whole world, than were ever afforded to any who have lived before us. It is *the* work to which God is especially calling the whole church at this day ; and blessed are they, who, encouraged and strengthened by his help, engage, at his call, in the holy enterprise of filling this world with the knowledge and glory of his great name.

And now, brethren and friends, what lessons, in review of our subject, may we gather up to be impressed upon our minds?

1. The first which suggests itself, and which, I doubt not, you have anticipated, is a lesson of gratitude to the great Lord of missions. How different the situation in which we meet this evening, from that occupied by the founders of this Board, thirty-six years ago! Its friends were then few; its destined field of labor unknown and unexplored; its funds yet to be collected; the spirit of missions yet to be roused, if not created, in the public mind; nay, the whole great work was to be begun, and that without experience, and in the face of great indifference, unbelief and opposition. How surprising the alteration since that day! The accessible field of missions vastly enlarged, including well nigh the whole world; the spirit of missions widely diffused and increasingly active; large experience gathered from being exercised in the work; the helping hand of God attending our efforts in the most encouraging manner, and brighter prospects continually opening before us;—we meet here to transact the annual business of the Board, cheered on in our great enterprise by the co-operation and prayers of hundreds of thousands of warm-hearted and devoted friends of the missionary cause. Surely, here is matter of gratitude, if aught on earth should inspire gratitude.

Some, who have embarked in this enterprise, may feel disappointed that no more has been done. But such, I am sure, have never duly counted the cost of the undertaking. In the warmth of their feelings,

or governed more by fancy than by reason, they may have imagined that a few years of effort and a few thousand dollars expended, would suffice to demolish the strong holds of heathenism and convert the world to God. But no intelligent Christian can have entertained such a view as this of the work of missions. It is a great work, far the greatest and most difficult ever undertaken by man. Instead of wondering that so little has been done towards its accomplishment, we have reason rather to be surprised, in view of the scantiness and feebleness of the means used, that so much has been done. If we review the past, in the exercise of a sober, Christian judgment, we cannot but feel that God has done exceeding abundantly above all that we had it in our hearts to ask, or even think. He has been beforehand with us in all our labors to advance this cause, preparing the way, and crowning effort with unexpected success. And in view of the numerous interpositions of his providence and grace in favor of the cause, which we, with our fellow Christians, have humbly endeavored to promote, it becomes us to be deeply and continually grateful.

Nor should any be unbelieving or backward to see and acknowledge the helping hand of God, which has been so signally manifested in the past history of the Board. It were easy to point out failures in particular instances, or to charge individual missions with mismanagement, and even the measures of the Board as not having been in all cases the wisest and best possible. But surely, such things, even should they be true, incidental as they are to all the undertakings of imperfect men,

should not blind our eyes to the many tokens of God's favor vouchsafed to the Board, nor prevent our rendering to him our tribute of thanksgiving for the great good which he has been pleased to accomplish through its instrumentality.

I cannot think it either right or Christian to maintain the posture of complaint and fault-finding in relation to a great and good cause, which is manifestly owned and blessed of God, simply for the reason that it is not, in all respects, conducted in what we deem the best manner. *I* could not take such a posture, without being reminded, and that too with no very easy or pleasant feelings, of the counsel of Gamaliel, given to his friends on a certain occasion, "And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God."

The warmest friends of the Board do not claim for it exemption from all mistake and error; this were to suppose its affairs to be conducted by angels and not by men. Nor do we, by any means, wish its proceedings to be screened from the watchful eye and the kind supervision of its friends and patrons. The safety and efficiency of the Board greatly depend upon such friendly inspection of its doings; and those who conduct its immediate concerns, far from shunning such inspection, earnestly invite it, and are thankful for it. It is a great fellowship of labor and responsibility in which we are engaged; and if God helps us in this work, notwithstanding the imperfections of our poor services,

let us thank him for his help, and unitedly go forward in his work, striving to make what we do in promoting it more perfect in time to come. It were certainly much more in unison with the spirit of the gospel, as it would doubtless tend much more to our own edification and comfort, to acknowledge God's hand in helping forward the cause in which we are engaged, and to thank and praise his name for the good he is doing by it, than to dwell upon alleged imperfections, or maintain a posture of unbelief, of fault-finding and crimination. If, in our view, there are imperfections and errors in the policy and management of this great and good cause, far from deserting the cause itself, or making war against it on that account, we should bear and forbear, and patiently and kindly wait, and use the proper means for their correction. Good men have here no interest to serve but that of the common cause of missions, the cause of God and human salvation; and while it may be expected of good men, that they will candidly listen to the suggestions of those who are professedly engaged in the same cause with themselves, it may be expected of them, at least, with equal confidence, that they will not be diverted from a course in relation to this cause, which they believe to be right, and which they see is manifestly approved of God.

2. Let us learn from our subject a lesson of duty. A great work is going forward in our day, the work of evangelizing the world. This work has upon it the high seal of heaven. It is in fulfilment of the great design of our Savior's mediation; it is in obedience to his last command, and it involves the

eternal destiny of earth's uncivilized millions. This work—I mean the portion of it committed to this Board—was commenced by our fathers, who now rest from their labors. It has passed into our hands, and we are called to carry it forward, to the utmost extent of our power, during our brief day of responsibility and toil; and then, in our turn, committing it to those who survive us, go with our fathers to the rewards which they enjoy in heaven.

The very help which God has hitherto afforded in the prosecution of this work, devolves upon us new and more pressing duties. The seed, which for many long years was being sown, with wearisome toil and much prayer, has begun to spring up, and the fields are white unto the harvest. It is ours to enter in and reap the harvest, and gather fruit unto eternal life; that so it may be fulfilled in us, as in the apostles of old, that they who sowed, and we who reap, shall rejoice together. If we fail to do this; in other words, if we fail to sustain and strengthen our missions by the increased help which is demanded, by the fact that God has so greatly prospered them, then shall we lose the fruits of past labors; and fields placed under hopeful cultivation and beginning to smile with moral verdure and beauty must be abandoned, and turned back to barrenness and desolation.

The missionary work, it should ever be borne in mind, is necessarily a cumulative work. The success of one year creates a demand for more work to be done the next year. And surely, because God helps us in our work, blesses our missions, and so

increases our labors and responsibilities, we may not ask him to stay his hand, or lighten the burdens which he thus lays upon us. Rather let us thank him for placing us under the blessed necessity of going forward in this work; and if, at any time, it seem to press too heavily upon us, let us take it up with new courage in his strength, casting our burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain us.

Our duty in respect to the cause of missions is not indeed to be ascertained or to be measured by the degree of success which may presently attend our endeavors. That duty comes to us under the sanction of a higher authority. It lies in two things,—first, it is the will of our ascended and reigning Lord, expressed in a plain command of his word, that we, his disciples, bear a part in causing his gospel to be preached to every creature; and, secondly, we have the means of affording essential aid in the accomplishment of this great work, and where there is a knowledge of duty and the means of doing it, there the obligation is perfect, and we are held responsible to the great Lord and Judge of all.

Our privilege, too, in this respect, lies in two things. First, the cause itself is essentially good, and in seeking to promote it we become co-workers with God, in God's most noble work, call into exercise the purest and best feelings of the heart, and adopt the most effectual way of securing growth in grace, and a high measure of present Christian enjoyment. And, secondly, all we do in this cause, from love to Christ and our fellow-men, Christ regards as done to himself, and he will remember it to our everlasting joy in the kingdom of glory.

3. Let us learn from our subject a lesson of godly fear, lest by any thing wrong in our spirit and manner of doing this work, we turn away God's helping hand from us. The cause, my brethren, in which we are engaged, is God's cause, and not ours, and its success depends absolutely on his blessing. Our plans, our means, our efforts, however multiplied and extended, would not avail for the salvation of a single soul, without the continued guidance and help of God's Spirit. 'It is not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit,' that this world's salvation is to be effected. This great cardinal truth is ever to be kept in mind by missionaries and the directors of missionary societies and their friends. It should form their plans, guide their policy, animate their efforts, and draw forth their prayers in faith and hope, under a deep, abiding impression, that without the help of God nothing can be done in this work ; and with his help, nothing is too great or too difficult to be done. Every thing we attempt in this great enterprise should be begun, continued and ended in an inward, heartfelt persuasion that we are simply instruments in God's hand to do God's work ; and this should make us most seriously solicitous to do his work in his way, and not in ours. There is no room here for worldly wisdom, or worldly policy. The whole enterprise should be conducted in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God. Especially does it become us to cherish habitually a godly fear, a holy jealousy, lest in the doing of the work committed to us, we displease God, and he withdraw his help from us. We may do this in a great variety of

ways. We may do this by indulging a spirit of self-confidence, or placing undue reliance on mere human instruments. We may do it by turning aside from our proper work, taking up burdens which the Lord does not impose upon us, or engaging in controversy about matters which, however important in themselves, or desirable to be attained, fall not within the appropriate sphere of this Board's agency. We may do this by departing from the scriptural model of missions—strictly a spiritual model—and conducting them on a wrong plan ; introducing into them more of the form than of the power of religion—more of what is secular and showy, than of what is spiritual and enduring ; building of hay, wood, and stubble, rather than of gold, silver, and precious stones, which only will abide in the coming day of trial.

In a conversation I had with the Rev. Mr. Tidman, one of the Secretaries of the London Missionary Society, some two years since, he made this remark, in reply to a question I put to him, in regard to the policy pursued by his Society in conducting its missions : Our only policy, he said, is to have no policy, but to preach the pure gospel, Christ and him crucified. This remark struck me with force, as having in it sound philosophy, as well as sound scriptural truth. It suggests the only true and efficient policy of conducting Christian missions—a policy aiming, as its main end, at the conversion of souls, and building them up in truth and holiness. This was Paul's policy ; it should be ours ; and the more closely we adhere to it, the simpler will be our plan, the more plain and unembarrassed our

course, and the more likely shall we be to enjoy the continued help of God. Much prayer, much humility, much consciousness of dependence on the Holy Spirit, with great simplicity of purpose, and consecration of heart and life to God's service and glory,—these are the essential elements of efficiency and success in the missionary work. They are right and pleasing in God's sight; they honor his power and grace; and where he sees missions conducted in this spirit, and with this end in view, there he will afford his help, and the work will go forward with power in the conversion and salvation of dying men.

4. Let us learn from our subject a lesson of encouragement and hope in regard to the future. The work of missions, it is true, is encompassed with great difficulties and embarrassments. It is a work which draws forth little sympathy or co-operation from an unbelieving world. It has no charms for the mere scholar, statesman or philosopher. It is not carried forward by the resources of the great and mighty among men. It is a work not to be consummated in a day or a year, but is to be carried on from generation to generation, how long we know not. It is to be carried on, too, in the midst of toil and suffering, with the sacrifice of much property and of many lives, and in the face of much opposition and of many reverses and discouragements. Still this work will go forward. It will go forward when we and others now engaged in it are dead and gone. It will pass into other hands, and be urged on by other agents, till the great object at which it aims, is accomplished, and the

whole world converted to God. The cause of missions is God's cause. He has set upon it, in our day, the seal of his approbation ; and his promise and power are pledged to make it triumphant over all the earth. It may meet with local and temporary checks. Particular missions may, for a time, fail of success, or be abandoned. False friends may desert the cause, and its true friends may sometimes be ready to faint because of the greatness of the work, and the mighty obstacles which lie in the way of its accomplishment. The heathen themselves, or such as falsely bear the Christian name, may rise up to persecute and oppose, and governments may put forth the strong arm of power to suppress the progress of truth, and test the fidelity of our missionaries, by subjecting them to trials, like those which the apostles and primitive Christians had to endure. Still, I repeat, the cause of missions will go forward. It has gone forward in a remarkable manner in our day, and never perhaps more remarkably than during the last year. Many events have occurred of great and auspicious interest in their bearing on our missions. The mission in Syria, long and severely tried, has assumed a new and very encouraging aspect ; and its facilities for preaching the Gospel in that dark land with success were never so great as at present. The great battle of religious freedom, it would seem, has been fought in Turkey, and the victory won. What it cost our fathers more than a century of struggling and suffering to achieve in England, has been achieved, after the struggle of a few months, in the empire of the Moslems. The rights of Protestant-

ism are recognised, and Protestant churches, under the auspices of our mission there, are being established. Divine influence, too, during the past year, has descended upon many of our missions, if not in copious showers, yet in refreshing dews, reviving the hearts of our missionaries, and raising to hope and to God many of the benighted and the lost. When I read of the work of God among the poor Indians in the far west, and especially of what has transpired within a few months among the Nestorians of Oroomiah and its neighboring villages, I seem to myself to be in the midst of those scenes of mercy which have so often been witnessed in the churches of our own land, and which we gratefully recognise as the manifestation of God's special presence and grace. These visitations of divine influence, we may confidently hope, will be more and more frequent, powerful and extensive, till the seed of the word, having been scattered broadcast over the earth, and the way prepared for so glorious a consummation, nations will be born unto God in a day, and a quick work will be made in bringing the whole world into subjection to Him who reigns King on the holy hill of Zion. Let us then look upon the cause of missions with strong confidence and bright hope. This cause is safe—a spiritual cause, carried on in the hearts of men by God's invisible, almighty power. Its elements are truth and love; its seat of action is the soul of man; its fruit, peace, joy, hope, present and everlasting happiness. This cause is safe; and it is the only cause in our world which is safe. Nation may rise against nation, governments may be established and over-

turned ; “ revolution may succeed revolution, as waves on a stormy sea ; ” and all the enterprises and affairs of men may perish and pass away in disappointment and confusion ; but the cause of missions, the cause of God, is safe. Our day of action will quickly be over. Another thirty-six years of the Board’s history will soon pass away, but we shall not be here to mingle in its councils, or aid in carrying out its measures. But the power that guards the cause we love, and which is engaged to bear it on to final and complete success, is above all change. It never grows old, is never weary ; and when that power has borne on this cause to its destined consummation, then the darkness and miseries of sin shall roll away from all lands ; light and salvation bless all the ends of the earth ; and unnumbered millions of our race, plucked as brands from the burning, shall stand with white robes and palms in their hands in the higher and eternal regions, joining in the song in which Christ is united with the Father, “ Salvation to God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever, Amen.”

